

Slavery Is What the So-Called “Shari’a Status Code” Seeks to Impose on Women in Iraq

written by AMAN Women's Alliance, Iraq | September 5, 2025

The Code grants men sweeping privileges in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody, while stripping women of these rights almost entirely. It treats women as perpetual minors under guardianship.

The so-called “*Shari’a Personal Status Code*”, introduced on **27 August**, is nothing less than a dangerous attempt to reintroduce slavery. It is a document dripping with hostility toward women, stripping them of their most basic rights, and stands as a permanent stain on the Iraqi Parliament that approved it, and on every authority that colluded in pushing it through in blatant violation of proper parliamentary and democratic norms.

This Code was passed **without reading, without debate, and without the knowledge of lawmakers themselves or the public**—a reckless disregard for the lives and futures of citizens. How can a law that directly affects families, women, and children be rushed through in secrecy, representing not the people’s will, but the narrow agendas of a privileged few?

This Code does not reflect the interests of citizens or the values of justice. It is a dangerous regression for human rights and a direct assault on the status of Iraqi women, who have long struggled for equality, dignity, and freedom.

The Code grants men sweeping privileges in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody, while stripping women of these rights almost entirely. It treats women as perpetual minors under guardianship, ignoring the reality that women today serve in Parliament and make decisions that shape the future of society as a whole. It reduces women to mere reproductive vessels, erasing their identity as mothers, caregivers, and equal human beings. What logic reduces women’s humanity to nothing more than biological containers?

The irony is bitter: those who drafted this Code benefit from the achievements of modern human intellect, occupying seats in a Parliament modeled after Western democratic systems, yet they seek to impose **medieval laws** on Iraqi women today.

This Code is not merely a religious text — it is a calculated **political, legal, and social assault**, targeting women specifically and threatening the values of modern Iraqi society as a whole.

We, the Women of Iraq, declare:

- This Code is a violation of human rights and is **rejected in its entirety**.
- No one — father, grandfather, brother, or any other authority — has guardianship over a woman’s right to marry. Marriage is her personal decision.
- **Polygamy is rejected under all conditions.** It is a crime against women, regardless of justification. Marriage must be monogamous.
- No one has the right to interfere when a woman decides to divorce her husband.
- No intimate relationship or sexual act may take place without the wife’s consent. Any sexual activity without consent is rape — this needs no mention in a marriage contract.
- Women’s inheritance rights must be fully guaranteed. Any discrimination is unacceptable.

under any pretext.

This Code, which institutionalizes discrimination between men and women, must be abolished in its entirety. All organizations and institutions that defend human rights, women's rights, and children's rights must stand against it and demand its immediate annulment.

We will accept nothing less than a law that explicitly guarantees **full equality between men and women** in all matters of personal status.

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